



FEDERATION OF FLY FISHERS.

Conserving -- Restoring -- Educating through Fly Fishing

Northern California Council

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December 8, 1998

Mr. Lester A. Snow

Executive Director

CalFed Bay-Delta Program

1416 - 9th Street, Suite 1155

Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: Request for additions to CalFed PEIS/EIR, Ecosystem Restoration Program Plan, nearly extinct Central Valley steelhead stocks

Dear Mr. Snow:

This is to advise you of our support for modifications and expansion of CalFed's draft Programmatic EIS/EIR Ecosystem Restoration Program Plan (ERPP) and its Program Goals and Objectives as they relate to Central Valley steelhead. We request that recommendations provided in the American Fisheries Society letter to you dated July 1, 1998 (enclosure) and in CalFed's own Core Team Report be integrated into the ERPP. Further, we request that CalFed's goal for Sacramento-San Joaquin river system steelhead population be that which existed in 1967. Should CalFed fail to recognize the scientific evidence with positive action we believe this process to recover Central Valley steelhead will have failed.

Natural steelhead runs in the Central Valley are factually near extinction. CalFed's focus on measures to restore chinook salmon do little to help steelhead. This predisposition must broaden if the EERP is to be acceptable. State tabulated Central Valley steelhead counts date back to the mid-1960's. They illustrate the sad state of the resource. As an example, in 1967 there were an estimated 13,488 naturally spawning steelhead adults in the Upper Sacramento River. In 1993 the estimate was 553 adults. Even hatchery counts are pathetically diminished. In 1967 15,312 Upper Sacramento hatchery steelhead were counted. By 1993 the count was 1511 fish. Water exports, reductions in spawning areas and dams unregulated for adequate temperatures were the principal causes for this catastrophic drop in steelhead populations.

CalFed must recognize the depleted state of the steelhead fishery resource in Central Valley rivers and streams. We note that National Marine Fisheries Service Biological Review Team recommended an "Endangered" listing status for these fish. The data supports their scientific view. CalFed has the capability to reverse the process of steelhead extinction now under way. In the most urgent terms we urge inclusion of the American Fisheries Society and CalFed Core Team recommendations in CalFed's PEIS/EIR Ecosystem Restoration Program Plan. We request that restoration of the Central Valley steelhead population to its level in 1967 be CalFed's goal.

This letter is sent to you by representatives of a consortium of California's sport angling organizations, as supported by environmental organizations much more experienced than we at presenting their views in a convincing manner. Our angling groups represent the views of a

significant cross section of this state's sport fishermen and women. We have grave reservations about CalFed's eagerness to reach expeditious conclusions. We reject solutions which fail to deal fairly with the shortcomings of the State and federal government's present one-sided water allocation system. That set of pre-conditions and allocation procedures has led to the near extinction of our Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers steelhead. We request that CalFed deal seriously with our concerns and meet the reasoned requests outlined in this correspondence.

Sincerely,

Charles P. Bucaria, Sr.
Conservation Vice President, NCCFFF

For the following organizations:

Northern California Council, Federation of Fly Fishers
Southwest Council (Southern California), Federation of Fly Fishers
California Sport Fishing Protection Alliance
California Trout
Trout Unlimited (California)
Trout Unlimited (National)
United Anglers

Friends of the River
Sierra Club

cc: Honorable Bruce Babbitt,
Secretary, Department of the Interior
Dr. William T. Hogarth,
Regional Director, National Marine Fisheries Service
Mr. Pat Coulston, President,
California-Nevada Chapter,
American Fisheries Society

Other Interested Parties

Enclosures